

MEMORANDUM FOR: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] stopped by this morning to drop off this series of questions, with which they are beginning their investigation and study. I told [REDACTED] that I knew from your comments to the Senate Select Committee staffers that you have a clear conceptual view of what estimates must and must not be and suggested that they interview you early in their canvassing.

Date *August 10th*

FORM 101 USE PREVIOUS EDITIONS

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF INTELLIGENCE

6 August 1976

Colleagues:

Attached is a list of proposed questions/issues involving the Estimative Intelligence process. We would like to make it the basis for our discussion on 11 August. The list represents our initial view of the central and also some of the side issues we wish to cover in the Center project on Estimates.

We would like your opinion on:

- whether our listing is complete, or are there other key estimative issues that we've missed or have failed to focus on usefully?
- which are the most important issues?

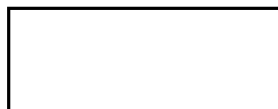
We would also appreciate your recollections of individual estimates that were of particular significance, perhaps because they were:

- right on the mark or badly off it;
- hit the policy machinery at the right spot with just the right timing, or were way off it;
- particularly well or poorly written; well or poorly coordinated.

Our purpose in seeking this information is to select a sampling of past estimates for study to see if we can gain any insights about the process as a whole that can be usefully developed in the paper.

Finally, your suggestions as to consumers, producers, and others whom we should interview in connection with this project would be appreciated.

Looking forward to seeing you,
Wednesday, 11 August.



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Att.

6 August 1976

THE ESTIMATIVE PROCESS AND PRODUCT

Questions/Issues

I. DEFINITIONS

1. What is a "national estimate":
 - NIEs and SNIEs only,
 - or also other papers such as NIAMs, contributions to NSSMs,
 - how about Alert Memoranda, Strategic Warning Staff publications, predictive papers produced by a single office (OPR) or agency, or the DCI
2. What criteria must be met by a "national" estimate"
 - subject matter of interest to a "national-level" policy consumer?,
 - fully coordinated interagency paper?,
 - approval by the DCI?
3. Who are the "national-level" policy consumers?
 - only the President and the National Security Council members?
 - other Executive Agency and Department heads as well?
 - lower levels of the Executive Branch? how low?
 - the Congress?
 - are Intelligence officers also "consumers?"
- 3a. How important is the estimative function as an element of the finished intelligence process today?

--most important?

--backseat to other products today?

II. USE/PURPOSE

4. How are estimates used?

--decision making, planning, background?

--as guidance for other intelligence analysis?

--as an aid to planning intelligence collection, analysis and resource allocation?

5. What should be the purpose, or purposes, of estimates, and which are most important?

--to support top-level national security policy-making only?, mainly?

--to really "estimate," or instead to set out the forces at work and alternative possible developments, leaving the final judgments or estimating to the consumer?

--to concentrate mainly on controversial subjects:

--those on which evidence, analysis and judgments differ,

--on matters in which intelligence appears to run counter to the generally accepted view,

--on the uncertain?

--to serve as a medium for systematic presentation of a variety of evidence and for illuminating conflicting interpretations and judgments for a wide range of consumers (policy and intelligence people)?

--to provide an educational service, particularly for non-specialists in the subject matter of the estimate?

--is there a limit to the subject scope of estimates?

--stop short of estimating outcomes in food, population development, etc. Stop estimating coup prospects and other similar, tricky subjects.

III. QUALITY OF ESTIMATES

6. Are estimates relevant - do they meet the users needs?
 - do they cover the important subjects, address the right questions?
 - are they too long-range, too short-range or near-sighted?
 - too remote from "real" problems and concerns?
 - do they suffer from a lack or awareness of policy information, options or plans?
 - what percentage are "nice to have" rather than needed?
 - how many are very valuable, useful, unnecessary?
7. Are estimates "predictive" enough:
 - too fuzzy and overly qualified
 - too speculative
 - contain too much/too little factual or background material
 - present analysis adequate to inspire confidence in judgments and support the conclusions
 - lacking in alternative interpretations
 - should an estimate ever say "we cannot come up with a judgment yet?"
8. Are estimates too late to be of use?
 - usually, often, sometimes?
 - Why are late estimates late?
 - does the request come too late?
 - are the estimates too long?
 - is the preparation too slow?, why?
 - overcoordination?
 - overload on analysts?

9. Is there a tendency in estimates to neglect overt information in favor of secret intelligence? If, so does this adversely affect the quality of estimates?

IV. FORM AND PROCESS

10. Are classification and controls a problem:
- do estimates suffer from the omission of highly sensitive information (intelligence, policy and covert action, if any)? If so, would more flexible and limited distribution practices permit inclusion of such information?
 - are estimates too highly classified/controlled to be useable? If so, would sanitized versions or separate, higher classified annexes be desirable?
11. Should estimates follow a more or less uniform pattern in content, structure and format?
- Or should they be quite different for different types of subject matter and situations (political, economic, military, technical, long or short range, planning or crisis management, etc.)?
 - Should estimates be highly "tailored" for a specific consumer and distributed on a limited basis only to those requesting them?
 - Would and should such tailoring permit inclusion of specific policy options under consideration, thus making the estimate more relevant, useful?
 - Should we produce different versions of the same estimates for different recipients because of classification level, sensitivity, intended use, etc.? Would this improve their utility?
12. How should estimates be initiated?
- by the consumers,
 - the producers,
 - both?
 - at what level,

- with some machinery to accept or reject requests and set priorities?
 - is there a need for a regular reexamination and updating of most estimates?
13. Are analytical resources adequate for the estimating task?
- is sufficient analytical effort devoted to estimating?
 - do competing tasks such as current intelligence drain off and interfere with the estimating function?
 - can the same analyst produce effective estimates if he has other analytical responsibilities?
 - do both estimating and current reporting benefit from being done by the same individual?
 - would more analysts with narrower fields and less workload pressure improve matters?
 - is the quality of analysis and analysts satisfactory?
14. Are analytical methods used in estimating satisfactory? Are there "new" analytical methods which should be used, or used more? Identify, and give examples of estimates which could have profited from methodological innovation.
15. Is there an adequately multidisciplinary approach to estimating? Is the interdisciplinary analyst or the interdisciplinary team the better approach? Other suggestions?
16. Should there be an established procedure for soliciting for inclusion in estimates the views of those "on the scene" (the Ambassador, country team, military representative, negotiator)?
17. Do estimates adequately reflect the perceptions of "the other side" when appropriate? Or are estimates flawed by a tendency to perceive and judge the motives, actions and reactions of others by our own value system and culture?
18. How are conflicting analyses and judgments best handled?
- dissenting footnote?

--alternative assessments in one estimate?

--separate estimates from competing analytical centers?

19. Is there a problem of conflicting estimates appearing in different intelligence publications from different agencies at different times on the same question?

Examples? Should there be more formal coordination? Or a "clearinghouse" to alert the consumer to this situation on specific papers?

20. Should estimating be left to the experts/specialists exclusively? Or is there a useful role for the generalist? If generalists can contribute, how is this best done,

--ad hoc by individuals or teams?

--by an institutionalized collegium?

21. Does the value of a collegium of generalists (and specialists) as a separate forum for the discussion and consideration of estimates justify maintaining such an institution? If so, should it be "in house," interagency, outsiders, advisory or responsible for the final estimate?

22. Are estimates too "inbred?" Should there be more participation by non-intelligence people: policy-makers, outsiders, contractors, academics? How should they fit into the process?

23. Should estimates be routinely reviewed and critiqued by outside specialists who do not have access to intelligence data? Would such a process be a safeguard against giving undue weight to intelligence to the neglect of overt data and outside judgment? Would it counteract the "conventional wisdom" of the insider or help insulate estimates from current policy bias?

--can outsiders be drawn effectively into the estimative process? How?

--is there a danger of a conflict of interest if non-governmental consultants were brought in?

24. Should the devil's advocate be institutionalized?
If so, how?
 - by an outside review board?
 - an in-house group exclusively devoted to this role? Should the views of the devil's advocate be included in the estimate, appended, or issued separately?
25. Should there be a "post mortem" of every estimate, designed to judge how right or wrong it was, how relevant, useful; should there be an attempt to determine the causes for errors in estimates and ways to avoid repeating them? How should the process be conducted?
26. Would estimates have more impact and be more useful to the consumer if they were presented differently:
 - by briefings
 - with more graphics
 - in other ways?
27. How important is consumer feedback and how valid are producers' complaints about the lack of feedback?
 - should there be some kind of consumers committee charged with reviewing and guiding the estimative process?
28. Does the search for policy relevance and consumer-producer interaction threaten the objectivity of estimates through too close association of intelligence analysts with policy and policy makers?
29. Should more estimates be undertaken which are directly related to current or contemplated policy decisions and directions? Should these estimates deliberately test and question the validity of the assumptions on which these policies are based? Should the estimator in this situation play the devil's advocate role for the policy maker?
30. What is the value and proper place of the "net assessment?" Should estimates include net assessments? Should net assessments be handled separately? Or should the net assessment incorporate or replace the estimate?

31. Are there other questions or problems which should be explored?
32. In view of all of the above, what are the most important steps which could be taken to improve intelligence estimates and the estimating process?

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